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Egypt: Islamic Cults, Crisis, and Politics

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A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

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The author of this paper is of the Office of Near East–South Asia Analysis. It was coordinated with the National Intelligence Council and the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESA,

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Egypt: Islamic Cults, Crisis, and Politics

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Overview

We expect the Islamic fundamentalist movement to be a potentially violent opposition force to the Egyptian Government through the 1980s. We believe, however, that the fundamentalists' fragmentation and lack of leadership will prevent them from overthrowing the government in an Iranian-style revolution.

The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic extremist groups such as Takfir wal-Hijra and Al-Jihad represent a common type of religious-political movement that has sprung up around the world in reaction to political, economic, and social stress. Such movements, called "crisis cults" by anthropologists, are driven to fanaticism by a leader or prophet who interprets his hallucinatory visions as a call for revolutionary change. The Muslim Brotherhood and the extremists in Egypt have followed the predictable pattern of crisis cults, which develops from early militancy to later moderation.

The Muslim Brotherhood, violent from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, has evolved to a politically moderate position. The Brotherhood supports, with reservations, the Mubarak regime while advocating its own long-term goal of building a truly Islamic society. It criticizes the radical policies of the extremist groups. We expect the Brotherhood to continue to offer a less violent approach to an Islamic society than the extremists.

The Muslim extremist groups, born in the social and political crisis that followed Egypt's defeat in its war with Israel in 1967, condemn the Westernized policies that the government follows and call for its replacement, by violence if necessary, by an Islamic institution. We expect the extremist groups, despite the imprisonment and execution of many members, to continue to recruit in the military as well as among rural migrants to the cities and to retain clandestine cells and strike out at the government from time to time with violent acts. Judging from the life cycles of crisis cults and the lack of leadership of most Egyptian extremist groups, we expect many of them to dissipate quickly and others to evolve to a more moderate philosophy in a pattern similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood. New groups may emerge, however, in response to further social stresses.

Information available as of 6 August 1982 has been used in the preparation of this report.

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The student Islamic societies, which emerged as more moderate alternatives to the extremist groups after Egypt's "victory" in the war of 1973, are likely to attain the fanaticism of true crisis cults only with the emergence of prophetic leaders. We therefore do not expect them to jell into an independent political threat to the government over the next few years.

Government policy, together with how well the government is able to combat deteriorating social and economic conditions, is inextricably linked to the course of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt. Such government policies as repression of the fundamentalists, increased Westernization, and the forging of closer ties to the United States and Israel will inflame the passions and intensify and prolong the militancy of the extremists. The Mubarak regime, however, can reduce the risk of violent confrontation with extremist groups by normalizing relations with the Arab world, putting greater distance between itself and the United States and Israel, and resisting excessive Westernization and corruption.

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Egypt: Islamic Cults, Crisis, and Politics

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The assassination in October 1981 of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat by a small group of Islamic extremists capped a decade and a half of growth in Islamic militancy in the country. The assassination of Sadat, who had been criticized by the Islamic fundamentalists for his pro-Western policies, raised the specter of an Iranian-style Islamic revolution in a country that is crucial to Western interests in the Middle East

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Although the revival of Islamic fundamentalism has called attention to the often violent reaction of societies whose traditional religious institutions and values are threatened by the penetration of Western influences, religious revival is not confined to the Muslim world. A return to more fundamental religious values is developing in many other areas of the world in response to individual and social stress.

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Anthropologists theorize that common causes underlie this widespread return to religion. In Third World countries they include the rapid cultural change imposed from outside as well as rising and unfulfilled economic expectations. These causes, in turn, contribute to a perception of society as morally decadent and to a sense of loss of personal and national identity. Unsettled social and economic conditions provide an environment in which religious revival movements, called crisis cults, thrive.

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Historically, the periodic revivals of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt appear to have been born of and driven by just such social and economic crises. Political and social instability after World War I gave rise to the Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic extremist groups such as the Takfir wal-Hijra (Repentance and Holy Flight) emerged after Egypt's humiliating defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967. The student Islamic societies arose when victory in the 1973 war with Israel failed to bring prosperity and opportunity for the emerging generation of educated Egyptians.

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The Egyptian fundamentalist groups do not form a monolithic movement but are fragmented into a multiplicity of groups with similar goals but differing philosophies on how to achieve them. The Muslim Brotherhood and the student Islamic societies (Jama'at Islamiya) are relatively moderate forces that pursue evolutionary methods to transform Egypt into a true Islamic society. The extremist groups, typified by the Takfir wal-Hijra, advocate violent revolution to establish a religious state.

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The common goal of the movements—a true Islamic order in which religion underlies all institutions—springs from their shared crisis-born origins. Their differing strategies for achieving this goal reflect their relative positions in the life cycle of crisis-driven religious movements.

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Crisis Cults: The Bridge From Religion to Politics [1]

Use of anthropological theory gives a unique cross-cultural and historical perspective to the contemporary Islamic resurgence in Egypt. Anthropologists have developed a model, the crisis cult, to describe the types of religious activism that have developed in various processes of cultural change. We believe applying the crisis cult model to Muslim societies helps explain the behavior of Islamic fundamentalist movements (figure 1).

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Even though the frustrations that breed the crisis cult may fester within the society for years, the cult does not appear until an individual articulates the crisis and offers a new set of ideas—claimed to be a new code sent by God—that better fits contemporary

[1] Anthropologists range widely in their definition of a crisis cult. In this paper we define it as a religious reaction to stress caused by a drastic social change with which normal routines, secular or sacred, cannot cope.

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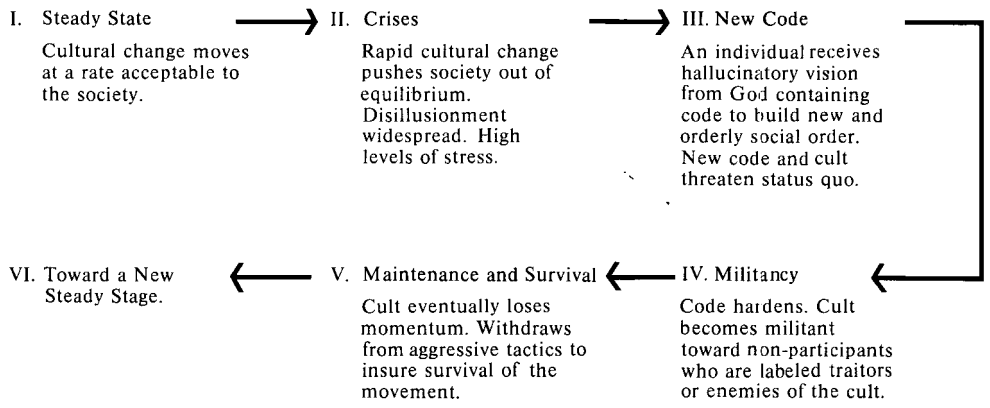
Figure 1
Life Cycle of a Crisis Cult



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needs. These cult leaders invoke age-old religious symbols to bridge the gap between past and present, religion and politics, and to sanctify their authority. In Muslim societies, in particular, the political message of the cult is couched in the familiar and powerful language of traditional religion, which facilitates the rapid spread of the message.

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The codes of the cults are designed to alleviate frustrations and conflicts in one of three ways:

- By rejecting all outside influences and returning to a state of society thought to have been the Golden Age.
- By retaining portions of the culture and incorporating selected elements of another culture.
- By rejecting entirely the old cultural system and replacing it with a new system believed more appropriate to the current social and political situation.

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The Iranian Islamic revolution is a good example of a crisis cult in the broadest sense—a societywide religious "cult," brought forth largely in reaction to Westernization and secularization. Khomeini appeared in exile as the prophet—the spokesman for the 12th or Hidden Imam of the Shia sect—trumpeting the ills of Iran and the need to revitalize the nation by building the Islamic state. He bridged the gap between the past—the Muslim state at the time of Muhammad and his immediate successors—and the present, and between religion and politics. His new code, a mixture of Shia Islam and revolutionary rhetoric, outlines the model for a new and holy social order. It contains the usual elements of a radical religious movement, including puritanical morality, austerity, and fanatical determination.

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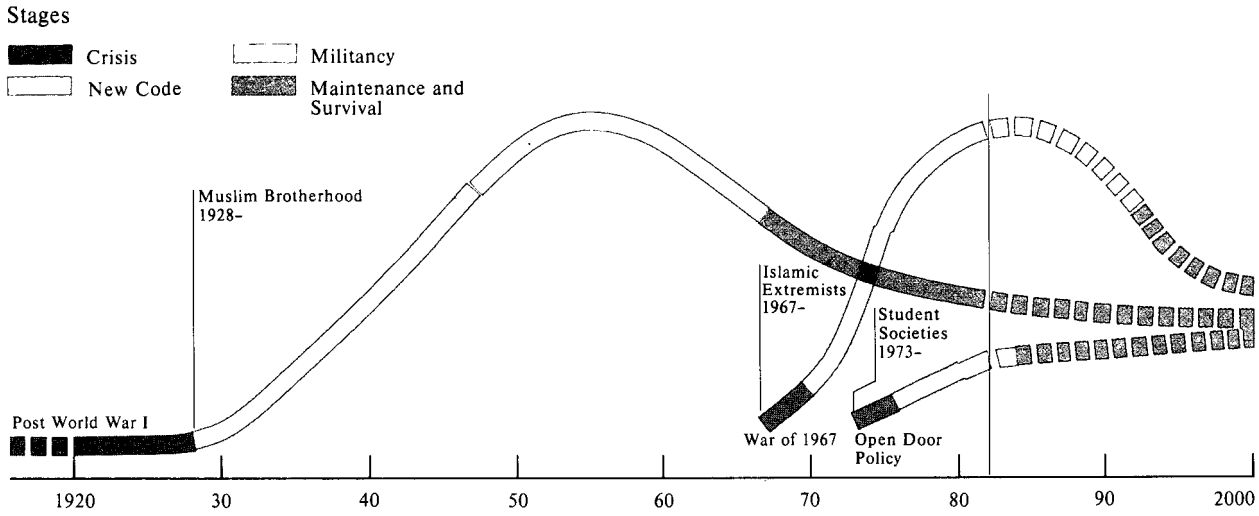
Figure 2
Life Cycles of Egyptian Islamic Fundamentalist Movements



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The Muslim Brotherhood: Crisis Cult at Full Cycle

The Muslim Brotherhood, active in Egypt since 1928, is a religious movement nearing the end of its development cycle (figure 2). It has evolved through all stages common to crisis cult movements: an incubation period of sustained stress following World War I; formation after a visionary, Hassan al-Banna, claimed to receive a message from God; a period of militancy and violence after World War II and during the Nasir era; and a maintenance and survival phase under Sadat and Mubarak.[2]

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Rise and Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood

In the decade following the founding of the Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna preached its code and recruited members from the ranks of civil servants, students, workers, and peasants. By the early 1940s the movement had grown rapidly in power and numbers and Hassan al-Banna extended his influence to include the Free Officers. Led by Jamal Abd al-Nasir, they ousted King Farouk in 1952.

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The Militancy Stage. The Brotherhood entered the militancy stage of the life cycle of a crisis cult in the late 1940s. By then it had grown into a political force rivaled only by the ruling Wafd Party. It had formed a paramilitary arm and used violence and intimidation in an effort to impose its ideology on the government of King Farouk. The government banned the Brotherhood following the murder in 1948 of Prime

Minister Nuqrasha Pasha by a Muslim Brother. Shortly after the Brotherhood was disbanded, government agents assassinated Hassan al-Banna. Although disorganized and weakened by the death of its founder and leader, the Brotherhood reemerged under new leadership to continue the fight against the government.

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The Brotherhood remained critical of government policies after the Free Officers ousted King Farouk. Nasir's government, always wary of the Brotherhood's power, pounced when Brotherhood members attempted to assassinate him in 1954. The government hung seven Brothers and imprisoned many others for their roles in the plot. Although Nasir failed to eliminate the Brotherhood, government persecution forced it underground until it emerged again in 1964. Security forces uncovered another plot to assassinate Nasir in 1966; it led to the hanging of three more Brothers—including Sayyid Qutb, whose writings later were to form the philosophical foundation of the Islamic extremists—and the imprisonment of many others who were implicated in the plot. Nasir's crackdown once again weakened the Brotherhood and forced the remaining leaders to adopt a more moderate political position that would enable the movement to survive.

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The Maintenance and Survival Stage. The Brotherhood moved into the maintenance and survival stage after Sadat replaced Nasir as President. The Brotherhood, which Sadat saw as a force that could be manipulated against Nasirism and the left, drew back from confrontation in favor of a policy that advocated nonviolent change to achieve an Islamic society. The new policy has emphasized education to prepare youth for the future Islamic society.

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The maintenance and survival phase of the Muslim Brotherhood is reflected in its middle class values and in its efforts both to work with the government and to put distance between its policies and those of the extremists.

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Despite its pledge of cooperation to Mubarak, the Brotherhood leadership shies away from fully endorsing him, probably because it is unsure of the direction of his policies. 25X1 Brotherhood leaders have been puzzled by what they perceive to be contradictory government policies. They were pleased by Mubarak's moderate course toward the fundamentalists as exemplified by his release of many of those detained in Sadat's crackdown last September. 25X1 leaders also were encouraged by the prospects of improved relations with other Arab states. But they undoubtedly were dismayed by Mubarak's subsequent switch to a harder policy against the extremists and are wary of the leftward tilt implied by strengthened ties with the Soviet Union 25X1

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Despite its current tacit support for the government, the Brotherhood most likely will take a harder line if the regime fails to remedy deteriorating social and economic conditions. 25X1

it maintains a small, 25X1 secret militia known as Al-Katiba (Battalion) to guard against repression and the rise to power of a leftist regime opposed to the Brotherhood's ideals. Although 25X1 the militia is unarmed, it has easy access to weapons through stolen army stores or the black market. 25X1

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Ideology: Code of the Muslim Brotherhood

On specific issues, a study by an Egyptian political scientist claims that Brotherhood ideology espouses:

- ***Government:*** the government's role is to implement and defend the system sent from God; legislators, chosen from the ranks of the *ulama* (religious scholars), should pass laws in accordance with the *sharia* (Islamic law) and serve as a check on the executive and judiciary; the judiciary should interpret laws so that they conform with the *sharia*.

- ***Politics:*** Islam is under attack by a conspiracy between the United States (singled out as most dangerous), the Soviet Union, and Israel; the Brotherhood condemns the Camp David Accords and other overtures to Israel; it agrees in principle with Khomeini's revolution because he reasserted the supremacy of Muslim law over the Shah's secular policies.

- ***Economy:*** the economic system should be based on a profit-sharing arrangement that circumvents the Koranic prohibition of usury; the *zakat*, an alms tax believed to be more beneficial and less complicated than an income tax, should supply funds to operate the government.

- ***Women in Society:*** the women's liberation movement is yet another manifestation of malevolent Western influence in Egypt; the Brotherhood seeks strict separation of men and women in educational institutions and in all public gatherings; birth control is particularly repugnant to the Brotherhood, which sees it, along with the West's disapproval of polygamy, as part of a Western conspiracy to destroy Islamic society.

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Islamic Extremists: Crisis Cults in the Militancy Stage

Defeat and Demoralization: Birth of the Extremists

The Islamic extremist groups, which threaten the Mubarak regime as they did the government of Anwar Sadat, represent crisis cults that have advanced quickly from the crisis mode to the militancy stage. They fermented in the caldron of defeat—in the turmoil and in the social and political introspection following Egypt's humiliating military defeat by Israel in 1967.

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According to newspaper accounts, many Egyptians, from President Nasir on down, sought religious rationalizations for the defeat and spiritual comfort for the humiliation. President Nasir, in his first speech after the war, said that the defeat had been a "predestined event to test the moral strength of the Egyptian people" and implied that Egypt had lost the war because Egyptians had turned away from their traditional Islamic values. Some Egyptians sought solace by turning to Sufism, a mystical and ascetic Islamic lifestyle. Others believed that they had been sent messages from God. Thousands of Egyptians, Muslims and Christian Copts alike, believed that they had seen a vision of the Virgin Mary at a small Coptic church in a Cairo suburb.

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From this supercharged religious atmosphere emerged individuals—future extremist leaders—who believed themselves ordained to overthrow the system that had caused Egypt to fall from God's grace. They recruited members from the universities and the armed forces, formed small cells, and produced new codes along traditional religious lines designed to revitalize Egyptian s

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Reign of Violence

Although the extremist groups had violent confrontations with the government earlier, the year 1977 marks the beginning of heightened violence—the militancy stage—against the government as well as against Egypt's approximately 6 million Copts. A bloody confrontation between the Takfir wal-Hijra and the government in that year signaled the change. The militants kidnaped a former Minister of Religious Endowments to secure the release of imprisoned comrades, then carried out their threat to kill the Minister when the government refused to meet their demands. The subsequent crackdown by the government left several Takfir members dead and others wounded.

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Interaction between the militants and the government over the past five years, in our view, has stoked the zealots' fires. In the years following 1977 the militants continued to threaten government leaders and to attack the Copts and bomb their churches. Government repression following each act of violence apparently confirmed the evils of government policies in the eyes of the extremists. According to testimony at their trial, for example, the extremists charged with killing Sadat viewed the crackdown in September 1981 as validation of their charge that the regime was corrupt and anti-Islamic. They believed it their duty to God to strike down an enemy of Islam.

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The Current Situation: Down but Not Out

Academic studies, news reports, and official sources show that extremist groups, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, are neither monolithic nor the creation of a single individual, nor do they have a broadbased appeal within Egypt. They comprise a large number of small, distinct groups with a total membership recently estimated by Egyptian officials to be between 10,000 and 20,000 (table 1). Their lack of a dominant leader or central authority in our view has led to infighting and splintering into ever smaller groups and to continuously shifting memberships. Government liquidation of one extremist group usually results in the creation of another.

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The government has reversed its previously lenient policy toward the fundamentalists imprisoned in September and October 1981. It has asked for the execution of 299 of the 302 members of the Al-Jihad al Jayyid (The Just Struggle) group [3] charged with masterminding the assassination of Sadat and the deaths of 80 people in attacks on a police station in Asiyut.

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The government's indictment accuses the Al-Jihad defendants of other crimes, including using force to try to overthrow the government, forming an illegal paramilitary organization, armed robbery, and sabotaging public property. The government, according to US Embassy observers, will also indict 870 persons involved in the assassination conspiracy whom the prosecutor calls "inactive" members of Al-Jihad.

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The Interior Ministry claims that Al-Jihad has been decimated by the arrests, but a prominent Egyptian sociologist estimates that the security forces have managed to arrest no more than 30 to 40 percent of the membership. Although we lack evidence, we believe the members who have escaped arrest are meeting privately to reorganize, recruit, and plan for future confrontations with the government.

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Ideology: Code of the Muslim Extremists

The political code of the extremists, according to the Egyptian sociologist previously cited, is more utopian than utilitarian; it fails to address the realities of running a complex modern state. In an ideology that parallels that of the Muslim Brotherhood, the extremists regard all non-Islamic social, political, and economic systems—including capitalism and Communism—as incompatible with God's teachings.

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The extremists, in interviews with Egyptian scholars, state that it is their duty to install an Islamic regime in Egypt even if violence must be used. They believe that the first step in bringing about the perfect Islamic society must be to rid society of all Western influences, including leaders whom they see as sympathetic to the West and, therefore, anti-Islamic. They see the Mubarak government, like the Sadat government before it, as badly tainted by Westernization, morally corrupt, and politically inept.

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Recruitment: Conversion to the Extremist Code

The Muslim extremists said in interviews that they have been most successful recruiting young people who have recently migrated to the cities where their traditional values are offended by the seemingly dizzying pace and blatant consumption of Westernized urbanites. They said they usually recruit at mosque services by seeking out and befriending those youths who appear most devout. They meet with these prospective recruits and stress the merits of their cause, point out the villains who they claim are

[3] Also known as Al-Jihad al-Jadid (The New Holy War).

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Table 1

Islamic Groups in Egypt

Group	Approximate Date of Formation	Estimated Member-ship	Ideology	Comments
Muslim Brotherhood	1928	500,000	Moderate	Violent during late 1940s through mid-1960s; changed policy with Sadat regime; now emphasizes evolution to an Islamic state; little evidence of close connections to extremists.
Jama'ia Shariya (Legal Society)	Early 1970s	Unknown	Moderate	Split from Muslim Brotherhood over issues of mysticism; probably more influential with Islamic extremists than with Brotherhood.
Shabab Sayyidna Muhammad (Youth of the Lord Muhammad)	Unknown	Unknown	Moderate	Ideology similar to Legal Society, but smaller membership.
Takfir wal-Hijra (Repentance and Holy Flight)	1971	4,000-5,000	Extremist	Involved in Sadat's assassination; more than 800 arrested in September crackdown; funds apparently come from remittances from members working abroad and robberies.
Al-Jihad (Holy Struggle)	Mid-1970s	1,000+	Extremist	Members also involved in Sadat assassination; appear to be group most directly involved in violence agaist Coptic Christians.
Jama'at ahl-Bayt (People of the House)	1970s	Unknown	Extremist	Shia group banned in 1979 for advocating Khomeini-style revolution; may have connections with Iranian religious leaders; no recent reports of activities.
Tahrir (Islamic Liberation Party)	Early 1970s	Unknown	Extremist	Ideology similar to Takfir.
Jama'at Quwwat al-Quran (Forces of the Koran)	Early 1970s	Unknown	Extremist	No record of violence and no recently reported activity.
New Islam	Early-to-mid-1970s	Unknown	Extremist	Calls for Iranian Islamic-style revolution; members primarily students in scientific disciplines or workers and engineers in factories; no recent reports of activity and no record of violence.
Al-Jihad al-Jayyid (The Just Struggle)	1980	Probably exceeds 1,500	Extremist	Umbrella name used by members of Takfir and older Al-Jihad groups that allegedly took part in assassination. Groups also believed responsible for postassassination attacks in Asiyut when 80 police officers and men were killed and another 120 wounded. More than 1,200 arrested in ensuing roundup.
Hizb Allah (God's Party)	1981-82	Believed to be small	Extremist	More than 60 arrested in postassassination sweeps. Not considered to be internal security threat by government.

Table 1

Islamic Groups in Egypt (continued)

Tanzin al-Qutbiyun (Supporters of Sayyid Qutb)	1981-82	Small	Extremist	More than 90 recently arrested. Not considered threat to government at this time. Named after Muslim Brotherhood leader and author who was executed for seditious activity during Nasir's presidency.
Al-Tala 'ia al-Islamiya	1982	Small	Extremist	Group uncovered in April 1982.
Group for the Promotion of Virtue	Late 1970s?	Small	Extremist	Violent toward those who violate Koran and traditions of Muhammad. Engage in pamphleteering.

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responsible for Egypt's deteriorated spiritual condition, and outline their plans to install an Islamic government.

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Extremists in the Military [4]

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The armed forces are a natural target for recruitment by Islamic revolutionaries. In our opinion the success of Iranian fundamentalists in neutralizing the Shah's armed forces probably has made a deep impression on extremists in Egypt. The military is the institutional power base for the civilian government, and the extremists would have to gain some direct support from the military or, at a minimum, neutralize it in the event of a broad social revolution. The military, moreover, is a source of arms and could carry out or train others in subversive terrorist operations.

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Extremists, in our opinion, have identified junior officers as their prime target for recruitment. We believe they are more susceptible to extremist rhetoric than senior or middle-grade officers for a number of reasons:

- Disillusionment with career prospects.
- Inability to cope with inflated living expenses.
- Idealism.

The first two factors could also apply to enlisted men and noncommissioned officers who receive lower pay and few of the perquisites of regular officers. Their lower educational level and lack of social mobility, moreover, probably increase their frustration and, hence, their attractiveness as targets for extremist recruitment.

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Iran: Islamic Catalyst

The Iranian Islamic revolution in our view is likely to remain the model for Egyptian extremists. We believe Khomeini's defeat of the Shah and his US backing has eclipsed at least for the moment the theological differences between Egypt's Sunni Muslims and Iran's Shias. We expect each Iranian victory in the war with Iraq to narrow those differences further and to be seen by Egypt's Muslim extremists as proof of

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Who Are the Muslim Extremists?

The following profile is based on a small sampling of militants imprisoned in the 1970s:

Young: *Twenties or early thirties.*

Rural or small town origins: *Although urban, the extremists are not urbane. Most were born in rural areas or small towns and were recent arrivals in the large cities.*

Middle or lower middle class backgrounds: *About two-thirds had fathers who were from the middle grades of the civil service. Others came from professional or farm families.*

Traditional family backgrounds: *Most came from "normal" cohesive families—no divorce, separation, or death of either parent.*

High achievers, technical educations: *A large majority were university graduates or students—largely in the fields of education, engineering, medicine, or science.*

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the righteousness of Khomeini's revolution. The extremists could interpret an Iranian victory over Iraq as a signal of God's approval of revolutionary Islam. Such a "divine" message could spark renewed violence by Egypt's extremists. On the other hand, we do not believe that the collapse of the Revolutionary Government in Iran would have a commensurate negative impact on the extremists.[5]

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[5] Religious cults, according to scholarly analysis, tend to rationalize untoward events or failed prophecies to suit their purposes. Failed prophecies frequently strengthen rather than weaken the sects' beliefs.

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Student Islamic Societies: Potential Crisis Cults

Although we have no evidence that the student Islamic societies, collectively known as Jama'at Islamiya, have been inspired by claimed revelations from God, we believe that they have the potential to evolve into true crisis cults with the emergence of prophetic leaders who could articulate the students' frustrations. Continued economic downturns and decreased employment opportunities could produce enough stress among the students for them to identify with the teachings of a charismatic self-appointed prophet.

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The student societies, like the extremist crisis cults of the late 1960s, were formed in a period of stress and frustration—in their case caused by the unfulfilled expectations that followed the "victory" in the war of 1973 and the advent of Sadat's "open door" economic policies. The students believed, according to an Egyptian social scientist, that the new economic policies brought riches only to foreign investors and Egyptian entrepreneurs and that few of the benefits trickled down to the students. The growing numbers of university graduates meanwhile were forced into the highly competitive private sector, had to wait as long as two years for low-paying government jobs, or had to leave Egypt to work in Europe or in the Gulf states. We believe that, despairing of their own uncertain futures in contrast to those of the rich who they charged flouted traditional Islamic values, the students formed Islamic societies as more moderate alternatives to the extremist groups. Despite the stresses of the period, however, no prophets appeared to convert the student frustration into the passions of a crisis cult.

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Lacking the philosophical commitment of the crisis cults, the student societies have instead concentrated more on appearances—on enforcing their version of Islamic morality, which opposes alcoholic beverages, dancing, Western arts and attire, and advocating sexual segregation in university classrooms and in public transport. To promote their cause they have disrupted and closed campus events that have displayed Western art, films, and literature. Banned and forced underground by the crackdown in September 1981, the student groups began to reappear earlier this year. An Egyptian social scientist says that the students are selling Islamic posters and devotional recordings and once again wear the full beard or the veil—symbols of their allegiance to the Islamic movement.

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We believe that if the student movement remains without a divine charter or a Khomeini-style leader—hallmarks of true crisis cults—the student groups will continue to lack the fanatical drive of the extremists and will dissipate more rapidly than either the extremists or the Muslim Brotherhood. But even though the societies may dissolve, we believe their ideals are likely to remain with individual members and to have an impact in Egyptian affairs as the members move into influential positions.

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Outlook: Future Course of Egyptian Islamic Cults

Judging from the emerging policies of the Mubarak regime, the pattern of crisis cult development, and the current composition and lack of leadership of the Islamic groups, we believe that the fundamentalists are unlikely to evolve into a group capable of seizing power over the next few years. We expect Mubarak to try to keep his promises to implement policies viewed favorably by the fundamentalists such as rapprochement with other Arab states and a crackdown on corruption. If he does, he will help to push the cults into the more moderate stage of their life cycle. But if he fails to make headway on issues important to the fundamentalists and adopts more repressive measures against them, he will prolong the lifespan of the cults and ensure continued trouble from them.

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We expect the Muslim Brotherhood, which is currently the strongest and most cohesive of the fundamentalist groups, to continue to move toward the center of the Egyptian political spectrum as it evolves through the culturally and politically acceptable phase of the cult cycle. If Egypt's economic and social conditions worsen far more rapidly than we expect, however, the Brotherhood's continued movement toward political moderation could be arrested by the rise to power of younger Brotherhood leaders who may be more eager to confront the regime over economic and social issues.[6] Under such circumstances, the Brotherhood could serve as the nucleus for opposition to the regime much as it did in the food riots of 1977.

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Although we believe that the extremists have little chance to launch an Iranian-style revolution so long as they lack a charismatic leader, we expect that they will continue to harass the government with terrorist attacks and possibly even with attempted assassinations. So long as the government is responsive to the fundamentalist cause, however, we expect that terrorist incidents will not coalesce into widespread unrest. The extremists, unlike the Brotherhood, are too fanatical and fractured to consolidate opposition against the government coming from other religious or secular groups or even from other extremists. The extremists' time in the militancy stage of the crisis cult cycle will be determined largely by government policies and prevailing social and economic conditions.

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It is unlikely, in our opinion, that a prophetic leader will emerge in the near term who could convert any of the student Islamic societies into true crisis cults or who could unite the diverse student groups into a major opposition force. We therefore expect the student societies to continue to be more of a nuisance than a serious threat to the regime.

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Table 2

Conditions Likely To Extend or Reduce Extremist Militancy

Condition	Extend or Reduce	Current Situation	Likely Extremist Reaction
Repression of Islamic extremism	Extend	Following period of relative tolerance, Mubarak has pursued harder line against extremist groups.	Renew attacks against the government and the Coptic Christians; create disturbances in universities; and increase recruitment efforts.
Continuation of "open door" economic policy	Extend	Mubarak has pledged to continue policy begun by Sadat.	Charge Mubarak with encouraging Westernization of Egypt.
Rising unemployment, particularly among university graduates	Extend	More students in universities than economy can absorb.	Create student frustration which is likely to increase vulnerability to extremist rhetoric.
Continued close association with United States	Extend	Mubarak backing away from Sadat's visibly close ties with US.	Links still close enough to offend extremists.
Continued rapprochement with Israel	Extend	Egypt living up to Camp David Accords.	Accords perceived by extremists as sellout of Islam.
Continued government endorsement of birth control program	Extend	Government-sponsored program under way since 1960; Mubarak, unlike Sadat, has endorsed program as high priority issue.	Extremists charge birth control is part of Western plot against Islam.
Reduction or cancellation of basic subsidies	Extend	Government subsidizes basic food prices; announcement that government intended to cancel subsidies resulted in rioting in 1977.	Extremists would probably see reduced subsidies as part of Western plot.
Emergence of charismatic extremist leader	Extend	Currently too fragmented to unite behind single leader.	A Khomeini-like leader could unite groups into potent political force.
Government fights corruption	Reduce	Mubarak has launched program to fight corruption; current focus is on petty corruption that has pernicious effect on day-to-day lives of people.	Extremists laud government's efforts, but likely to criticize meager results.
Mubarak continues simple lifestyle	Reduce	Although Mubarak not an openly pious person, he is not likely to abuse perquisites of office.	Extremists will find it difficult to build case that Mubarak is anti-Islamic even if he does not appear to be devout Muslim.
Egypt normalizes relations with moderate Arab world	Reduce	Initial stages of normalization under way.	Extremists have criticized policies toward Israel, which have isolated Egypt from rest of Arab world.
Islamization of government policy along model advocated by extremists	Reduce	Adoption of Islamic political and economic institutions imply total government upheaval.	Extremists, who contend Islamic law is only legitimate political-economic system, would laud any moves toward Islamization of government institutions.

25X1

Although the life cycles of even the most militant cults will move into a moderate phase with time, new groups are likely to arise in response to further social stresses. The fundamentalists' message will leave its mark on Egyptian society as well as on the government. Longer term changes will probably move Egypt toward a more Islamic way of life than it exhibits today. We expect these changes to occur as the government makes concessions to moderate fundamentalism and as the Muslim Brotherhood and student Islamic society members assume responsible positions in the government, military, and professional communities. A more Islamic Egypt would probably remain linked to the United States, but the intensity of the bond would be reduced from what it is today.

25X1

Annex: Sadat's Policies Toward the Fundamentalists

Long before he cracked down on his political and religious opponents in September 1981, President Sadat recognized the need to moderate his modernist, Western image with more traditional pro-Islamic policies in order to check fundamentalist passions. He implemented policies to deflect criticism and to divide the religious opposition:

- The *sharia* (Islamic law), incorporated into the Egyptian constitution as a major source of legislation after Sadat took office in 1971, was made the *sole* source of legislation in 1979.
- Provincial governors were given more control over local issues in 1980 in response to demands from religious opponents to decentralize the government.
- "Outside agitators" were blamed for sectarian strife. The CIA was blamed for skirmishes between Copts and Muslims in 1972, but the Soviets took most of the heat thereafter.
- Accommodation was reached between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood agreed to appeal for nonviolence, to encourage other Muslim dissident groups to adopt moderate stands, and to avoid preaching on political issues. Sadat, in return, permitted the Brotherhood to operate as a nonpolitical organization.

25X1

The policies were generally effective. Although many critics were dubious of the "outside agitator" charges, the charges lifted much of the blame for domestic unrest from the religious opposition; the governors, who now shouldered more responsibility for local issues, were forced to ride herd on religious extremists in order to keep their positions; and the accommodation with the Muslim Brotherhood paid off when the Brotherhood exerted a moderating influence during the religiously based disturbances in Cairo, Asiyut, and Minyah in 1981.

25X1

In September 1981 Sadat dramatically reversed his policy of accommodation and took a hard line against his religious and secular opponents. The change in policy apparently was prompted by what Sadat saw as a broad and pervasive conspiracy between the Islamic fundamentalists and his political opposition aimed at destroying his domestic and foreign policies. We suspect the two developments that triggered the September crackdown were the high casualties in the three-day riot in a Cairo slum in June and Sadat's alarm over the ease with which the fundamentalists peacefully marshaled 100,000 supporters in Cairo's Abdin Square for a prayer meeting in August.

25X1

In line with Sadat's claims of a conspiracy between fundamentalists and his political opponents, more than 80 percent of those arrested in the crackdown were affiliated with the political opposition and were not members of fundamentalist groups. The Muslim revolutionary groups and the university-based Islamic societies were the principal targets. About 470 members of Takfir wal-Hijra were arrested along with 235 members of the extremist groups and about 150 leaders of the student Islamic societies. Sadat threw both secular and religious leaders into prison—including Umar al-Talmasani of the Muslim Brotherhood and former *Al-Ahram* editor Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal. He ordered the closing of the opposition press—including the Socialist Labor Party's *Al-Shaab* and the Muslim Brotherhood's *Al-Da'wa*. He also moved to tightly control activities and to ban political sermons in Egypt's 40,000 private mosques.

25X1

By lumping his secular opposition with the religious extremists, Sadat alienated those who would have supported a harder line against the religious militants. Sadat—sensing mounting criticism of the crackdown—attempted to deflect it by charging that the Soviets were plotting to stir up religious strife in Egypt.

25X1

Reactions to the September suppression of the religious opposition were predictable: most Egyptians, more concerned with economic than with political issues, probably either agreed with or were apathetic to Sadat's actions. The Muslim extremists, fortified in their opposition to Sadat and his policies, withdrew to regroup for their campaign against him. A small group, associated with Takfir wal-Hijra and Al-Jihad, continued their plans to kill the entire government leadership, take over government broadcasting facilities, and foment an Iranian-style revolution. The assassins chose 6 October to act because the celebration of the anniversary of the 1973 war presented an opportunity to kill the leadership as the first step in the revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood adopted a wait-and-see stance; Brotherhood leaders, who feared that the Communists might move in if Sadat were overthrown, instructed members to refrain from violence and not react to government moves. Many members of the student Islamic societies shaved their beards and donned Western-style clothing.

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